

Claims:

1. A process for preparing benzoic esters whose alkoxy groups have from 7 to 13 carbon atoms by reacting benzoic acid with at least one alcohol having from 7 to 13 carbon atoms, the water of reaction formed being removed from the reaction mixture during the esterification reaction by distillation with the alcohol used in excess, and the alcohol not converted in the esterification reaction being removed after the esterification reaction,  
characterized  
in that the reaction takes place in the presence  
of a tin(II) compound as catalyst at a temperature  
of 160 to 250°C and in that, without treatment  
with a base, the catalyst and/or its tin-  
containing derivatives are removed by filtering or  
by centrifuging from the reaction mixture which  
remains after the unconverted alcohol has been  
separated off, to an extent such that the tin  
content of the end product (filtrate) is below  
1 mg/kg (ppm).
- 25 2. The process of claim 1,  
characterized  
in that a mixture of alcohols with the same or  
different number of carbon atoms is used.
- 30 3. The process of claim 1 or 2,  
characterized  
in that alcohols used are heptanols, 1-octanol,  
2-octanol, 2-ethylhexanol, nonanols, decyl  
alcohols and/or tridecanols.
- 35 4. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 3,  
characterized  
in that the unconverted alcohol is removed by

stripping, distilling or steam-distillation or by a combination of two or more of these methods.

5. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 4,  
characterized  
in that the unconverted alcohol is separated off after the esterification reaction by vacuum distillation and subsequent stripping with steam or nitrogen.  
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6. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 5,  
characterized  
in that the catalyst is separated off at a temperature below 160°C.  
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7. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 6,  
characterized  
in that the catalyst and/or derivative(s) thereof is/are separated off from the reaction mixture,  
20 after the alcohol has been separated off and without base treatment, by filtration at temperatures below 130°C.  
25
8. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 7,  
characterized  
in that the volume of liquid removed from the reaction mixture during the esterification by (azeotropic) distillation is made up in whole or in part with the reactant alcohol or reactant alcohol mixture.  
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9. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 7,  
characterized  
in that the volume of liquid removed from the reaction mixture during the esterification by (azeotropic) distillation is partly recycled, by separation of the liquid separated off into an aqueous phase and an organic phase, and recycling  
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of the organic phase into the esterification reaction.

10. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 7,  
5 characterized  
in that the volume of liquid removed from the  
reaction mixture during the esterification by  
(azeotropic) distillation is made up in whole or  
in part, by separation of the liquid separated off  
10 into an aqueous phase and an organic phase and  
recycling of the organic phase, additionally  
admixed with fresh alcohol, into the  
esterification reaction.
- 15 11. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 7,  
characterized  
in that the volume of liquid removed from the  
reaction during the esterification by (azeotropic)  
distillation is made up in whole or in part with  
20 the fresh alcohol.
12. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 11,  
characterized  
in that tin(II) salts of monocarboxylic or  
25 dicarboxylic acids are used as catalyst.
13. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 12,  
characterized  
in that a molar ratio of tin to benzoic acid of  
30  $10^{-5} : 1$  to  $10^{-3} : 1$  is set at the beginning of the  
reaction.
14. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 13,  
characterized  
35 in that a polymeric or ceramic membrane, composite  
membrane or paper filter is used as filter.
15. The process of at least one of claims 1 to 14,

characterized  
in that the benzoic acid is esterified to an acid number of <0.1 mg KOH/g, determined in accordance with DIN EN ISO 2114.

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16. A composition comprising benzoic ester(s), obtainable by a process of at least one of claims 1 to 15.

10 17. The composition of claim 16,  
characterized  
in that the tin content of the product is below 1 mg/kg.

15 18. The composition of one of claims 16 and 17,  
characterized  
in that it comprises isononyl benzoate.

20 19. The use of the composition of any one of claims 16, 17, and 18 in paints, varnishes, adhesives or components of adhesives or as a viscosity reducer and/or plasticizer for PVC.